PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This booklet has been developed to assist those individuals who have been assigned the responsibility of developing, implementing and maintaining an occupational health and safety (OH&S) policy at their workplace. It briefly outlines the importance of an OH&S policy, how to write a policy, how to incorporate it into the workplace and how to ensure its successful implementation. A reference to the legislative requirements for an OH&S policy is included as well as sample policies.

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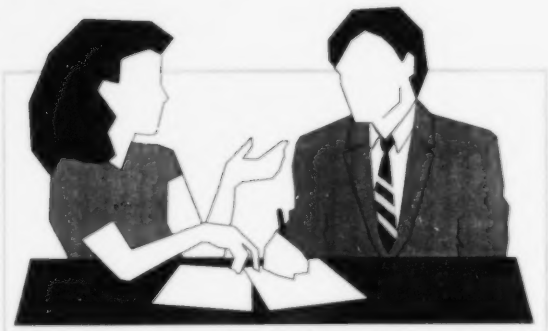

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

WHSCC
WORKPLACE HEALTH, SAFETY & COMPENSATION COMMISSION

April, 2003

Introduction

In January 2002, amendments to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and Regulations came into effect. The amendments were developed to improve health and safety and to strengthen the presence of worker health and safety (WH&S) representatives and occupational health and safety (OH&S) committees in the workplace. One specific amendment deals with the requirements for the development, implementation, and maintenance of an OH&S policy. This booklet contains information to assist you in putting this legislative requirement into action. Please refer to Appendix A for legislative requirements and Appendix B for samples of OH&S policies.

Importance of an OH&S Policy

An OH&S policy is the employer's written commitment to workplace health and safety. In addition to clearly stating the health and safety goals of the business/organization, the OH&S policy outlines roles and responsibilities as they relate to health and safety.

Employers are responsible for their workers and have a legal and moral obligation to provide for their safety and well being. Having an OH&S policy in place helps employers meet this responsibility. It also helps them to effectively communicate their commitment to health and safety to workers and the public.

Developing, implementing and maintaining an OH&S policy also makes good economic sense. Accidents are costly, perhaps even more expensive than expected. Accident-related costs can add-up quickly and may include:

- production loss,
- possible overtime,
- time spent on completing paper work,
- pain and suffering of an injured worker,
- loss of business or goodwill or negative publicity,
- possible legal costs,
- effect on the community.

By developing and implementing an OH&S policy, these costs could be reduced.

How to write an OH&S Policy

When developing an OH&S policy:

- include the WH&S representative/OH&S committee and workers in the process;
- use clear and simple language;
- ensure all necessary information is included; and
- reflect the specific needs and objectives of the workplace.

The best policies are specific to a workplace and not copied from others. An employer may assign the development of an OH&S policy to a staff member. However, the written OH&S policy is a pledge to workers; therefore, the employer is responsible for its content.

The content of an OH&S policy should include the following:

- the employer's ongoing commitment to making health and safety a part of all workplace activities;
- the employer's statement of support for the WH&S representative/OH&S committee;
- the intention to use the OH&S legislative requirements as a starting point for a healthy and safe workplace;
- a plan for putting the OH&S policy into action;
- a commitment to provide adequate resources;
- management's responsibility for enforcement of health and safety;
- the importance of consultation and cooperation between management and workers for the effective implementation of the OH&S policy;
- the signature of the employer and the person or persons responsible for the management of the employer's operations in the province and the date of approval; and
- roles and responsibilities of all personnel, including outside contractors, in maintaining a healthy and safe workplace for all workers, clients and the general public.

The following section includes these general responsibilities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Employer responsibilities include:

- providing and maintaining safe equipment, systems and tools;
- providing and maintaining the information, instruction; training, supervision and facilities that are necessary to ensure the health, safety and welfare of workers;
- ensuring workers use necessary protective clothing and devices;
- ensuring work procedures comply with legislation and safe work practices at all times;
- ensuring all workers are aware of workplace hazards and follow safe work practices and procedures;
- consulting/cooperating with the WH&S representative/OH&S committee;
- ensuring workplace inspections are completed on a regular basis and follow-up actions taken as necessary;
- ensuring WH&S representative/OH&S committee participate in workplace inspections; and
- reporting serious injuries or death to the assistant deputy minister and the WH&S representative/OH&S committee.

B. Worker responsibilities include:

- protecting his/her own and other workers' health and safety;
- consulting/cooperating with the WH&S representative/OH&S committee;
- knowing and following legislation and safe work practices at all times;
- properly using all safety clothing/equipment/devices provided; and
- reporting unsafe conditions in the workplace.

C. WH&S Representative/OH&S Committee responsibilities include:

- participating in the identification of workplace hazards;
- participating in workplace inspections;
- making recommendations to the employer for the enforcement of safe work practices;
- receiving and recording health and safety concerns from workers; and
- establishing/promoting health and safety education.

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D. **Contractor responsibilities include:**
- operating in accordance with legislative requirements;
- complying with industry safe work practices; and
- following the employer's policies and procedures regarding health and safety.

How do I incorporate the OH&S Policy into my workplace?

Simply having a written OH&S policy is not enough to meet obligations regarding workplace health and safety. To ensure the OH&S policy is effective, there should be a plan for putting the words into meaningful actions. Some ways of doing this include:

- providing health and safety orientation for new staff;
- providing health and safety orientation for current staff who start new job tasks, move to new locations, or use new tools, equipment or work processes;
- providing health and safety training on an on-going basis;
- including health and safety responsibilities and performance objectives when hiring and evaluating staff;
- recognizing, evaluating and controlling hazards;
- conducting regularly scheduled workplace inspections;
- establishing procedures for reporting and investigating accidents/incidents;
- documenting and recording health and safety related activities; and
- monitoring management and staff to ensure they are carrying out their health and safety responsibilities.

Ensuring success

Part of a successful OH&S policy is ensuring that all workers are aware of its contents. This can be accomplished through:

- OH&S training;
- distributing a copy to all workers;
- including it in policy and procedure manuals;
- postings on notice board(s);
- safety talks and meetings; and
- a positive example set by management (i.e. how they respond to safety issues, how they carry out their roles and responsibilities, how they enforce the OH&S policy).

Maintaining an OH&S policy is as important as developing and implementing it and is necessary for its effectiveness. Health and safety is not something to be entered into and then forgotten. It is an ongoing process that requires continuous attention of employers, workers, and the WH&S representative/OH&S committee members. These individuals must keep up-to-date with changes in legislation and other areas that affect workplace health and safety.

An OH&S policy should be reviewed yearly and revised as required to ensure it continues to effectively reflect the specific needs of the workplace.

APPENDIX A

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN OH&S POLICY

For exact wording, please refer to the official Occupational Health & Safety Act and Regulations.

Workers With Less Than Ten Workers

Worker Health and Safety Representative

Refer to *OH&S Act*, section 41.(1)

Where less than 10 workers are employed at a workplace, the employer shall ensure that a worker not connected with management of the workplace is designated as the WH&S representative to monitor the health, safety and welfare of the workers employed at the workplace by identifying concerns and initiating workable solutions.

Refer to OH&S Policy

Refer to *OH&S Act*, section 36.2

Where less than 10 workers are employed at a workplace, the employer shall establish an OH&S policy in accordance with the Regulations. An OH&S policy shall be established in consultation with the WH&S representative and be posted in a prominent place(s) at the workplace.

Refer to OH&S Regulations, section 4.1

An OH&S policy shall be signed by the employer and by the person or persons responsible for the management of the employer's operations in the province. It must include:

- a statement of the employer's commitment to health and safety in the workplace;
- the employer's commitment to cooperate with the WH&S representative and workers in carrying out OH&S responsibilities; and
- a statement of the OH&S responsibilities of the employer, supervisors, the WH&S representative and other workers.

An employer, in consultation with the WH&S representative, shall review and where necessary update the OH&S policy at least annually.

Workplace With Ten or More Workers

OH&S Committee

Refer to *OH&S Act*, section 37

Where 10 or more workers are employed at a workplace, the employer shall establish and maintain an occupational health and safety committee to monitor the health, safety and welfare of workers employed at the workplace.

OH&S Program

Refer to *OH&S Act*, section 36.1; OH&S Regulations, section 4

Where 10 or more workers are employed at a workplace, the employer shall establish and maintain an OH&S program. The program shall be established in consultation with the OH&S committee. One part of the OH&S program, usually referred to as an OH&S policy, is the employer's statement of commitment and an outline of responsibilities for occupational health and safety.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLES OF OH&S POLICIES

Sample OH&S Policy #1

I, (business/organization owner/president/CEO, etc.) of (business/organization name) am ultimately responsible for workers' occupational health and safety at the workplace. I will strive to protect workers from injury and illness related to work; and I will provide the resources necessary to keep the workplace healthy and safe. To fulfill this commitment (business/organization name) will make every effort to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace by following industry standards and complying with OH&S legislation. In keeping with OH&S legislation, a healthy and safe workplace will be created in consultation and cooperation with management and workers, in particular the WH&S representative/OH&S committee.

Supervisors will be held accountable for the health and safety of workers under their supervision. Responsibilities include ensuring machinery and equipment are safe and established safe work practices are followed. To protect their health and safety, workers must receive an OH&S orientation and specific work task training.

Every worker must protect his/her health and safety and the health and safety of other workers by following legislative requirements and safe work practices and by reporting unsafe conditions they observe.

Contractors will be required to meet legislative requirements and follow (business/organization name's) policies and procedures regarding health and safety.

Health and safety is an integral part of this firm's every day business. It is in the best interest of all to join together and put into practice health and safety principles in all work activities.

This OH&S policy will be reviewed on a annual basis and revised as necessary.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Business/organization President, CEO, etc.)

Sample OH&S Policy # 2

(Business/organization name) has on ongoing commitment to the protection, from accidental loss, of all its resources - human and physical.

In fulfilling this commitment to protect both people and property, we will provide and maintain a safe and healthy work environment as indicated by best practice standards and legislative requirements. Management will strive to identify and eliminate any foreseeable hazards, which may result in personal injury and property loss/damage, through regular workplace inspections, hazard assessments and the reporting of workplace accidents/incidents. We will provide the resources and education required to ensure workers are aware of the hazards they face and how they can protect themselves.

A safe work environment can only be created with the cooperation of workers and all levels of management. Thus, all workers must be equally committed to loss control and injury prevention. Workers must use the safety devices/ clothes/equipment provided and follow safe work practices. They must also report in a timely manner, any unsafe acts or conditions that arise. The same applies to contractors who must read and abide by legislative requirements and our safe work practices.

To maintain a safe and healthy environment, (business/organization name) will ensure there is constant consultation between management and workers on health and safety related issues as they apply to the design, purchasing, operation and maintenance of (business/organization name). This will be achieved through regular meetings with the WH&S representative/OH&S committee. We will also monitor the application of safe work procedures through constant supervision and performance reviews and take follow up action as required.

Creating a healthy and safe work environment is of vital importance to (business/organization). Without it, (business/organization name) cannot be the best it can be. Therefore, I trust all of you will join me in a personal commitment to workplace health and safety.

Signed: _____ Date _____

(Business/Organization President, CEO, etc.)

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